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BOSTON GLOBE
24 October 1985

CIA broadens contacts with campuses in US

By Richard Higgins
Globe Staff

Almost a decade after its ties to academe were severely strained by disclosures of secretly funded research and abuses in covert operations, the Central Intelligence Agency is aggressively rebuilding its bridges to US campuses, according to present and former CIA officials and academics.

The agency acknowledges that using the academic community to bolster the CIA's analyses of world economic and political events is a key goal of its deputy director for intelligence, Robert Gates.

This spring, George Lauder, the chief CIA spokesman, called "the dramatic expansion of [the CIA's] contacts with academics" and independent think tanks "a major CIA initiative in recent years."

In a letter published in Foreign Policy, Lauder wrote that in 1984 "1,200 [CIA] analysts attended nearly 500 conferences on substantive issues, many of them sponsored by universities . . . Many of the agency's substantive papers are now reviewed by academics." The agency, Lauder added, is also "seeking out scholars with a different point of view than the CIA's."

The CIA will not reveal the extent of its contracts with scholars or academic institutions, but it does acknowledge its renewed interest in academe.

"CIA analysis is enhanced by contact with the academic community," the agency said in a statement in response to a Globe inquiry, "and the CIA has expanded those contacts on issues of interest to the agency and to national security."

The CIA funds numerous scholarly conferences in the United States and around the world each year on subjects ranging from the Philippines to Islamic fundamentalism to nuclear proliferation. It is increasingly inviting academics to its own conferences and to review CIA intelligence analyses.

Last week, for example, scholars from Harvard and the Universities of Maryland and California attended an unclassified CIA conference in Washington on European security, according a participant.

Sponsors, funds research

The CIA sponsors research at some institutions: Harvard and Brown universities are among those with current contracts; in the last two years it has sponsored research at Villanova, Rutgers, Texas A&M and the University of Illinois. It provides funds to scholars writing books, doing field work abroad and working as consultants to the agency. Funding for other academic enterprises are often channeled through third parties, including foundations, publishers and other government agencies.

Patti Volz, a CIA spokeswoman, declined to specify the number of academic consultants working for the CIA. However, former agency officials, who declined to be identified, and scholars familiar with the CIA estimate that about 150 professors currently serve as consultants and read drafts of CIA analyses.

The new ties come almost 10 years after the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence revealed that the agency had secretly arranged for publication of hundreds of books and that scores of professors had worked for the CIA without informing their universities. Because of that and other CIA abuses, many academics shunned contact with the agency for years.

Today, however, the picture has changed.

"Many more people seem to feel that there's nothing wrong from a moral or professional point of view with consulting or doing particular services, including research, for the CIA," said professor John Womack, a former chairman of Harvard's history department. "There was a time when academics felt that wasn't a good idea, but that seems to be subsiding."

John Shattuck, vice president for public affairs at Harvard University, said he was aware of only one CIA contract that had been cleared through Harvard's Office of Sponsored Research, as required by university policy, a $7,500 grant to a professor investigating new information technology.

But he said he believes there has been a trend toward more ties between the agency and professors.

Trend toward involvement

"There is certainly not less money flowing in," he said. "I think the CIA has been trying to find an academic home all over the place, and the trend has certainly been toward further involvement." Other academics agree.

CIA grants for unclassified research, like other federal contracts, cannot be concealed by law. About a dozen universities, furthermore, have their own guidelines to ensure that CIA funding does not abridge academic freedom.

When professors receive CIA funds as "individual contractors," however, it is generally up to them to report it to their superiors. For that reason, some university officials say they can't rule out that some professors work part-time for the CIA without their knowledge.

John M. Deutch, the provost of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said MIT now has no CIA contracts for sponsored research. Any such grant would have to pass through the university administration, he said.

However, Deutch added, "I'm

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certain some individual faculty members act as consultants to the agency." He said he said he has no way of determining how many.

CIA ties still controversial

Despite the more receptive climate, CIA contacts are still often controversial.

The Harvard campus was shaken earlier this month by the disclosure that a professor had failed to obtain advance university sanction for a CIA contract for the funding of a recent academic conference and had accepted more than $100,000 in CIA funds to write a book on Saudi Arabia.

Louis Mennand, an MIT professor of political science, said that while he was assistant to the provost in 1983, the head of the CIA's Boston office asked him to help "identity foreign students who might become future assets. I turned him down quite forcefully."

The CIA effort to build new ties to academe dates to the late 1970s. Stansfield Turner, then CIA director, recounts in "Secrecy and Democracy," published this year, that he began a campaign to improve the agency's relationship to the academic world.

"What did we want these academics to do? The primary need for contact between the CIA and academia is to share ideas on all manner of world affairs, ranging from the psychology of foreign leaders to the state of world oil production to the strength of Islamic fundamentalism. The CIA, like every research and analytic institution, must be able to test its views and conclusions against the thinking of other experts."

In a telephone interview, Turner said he "made considerable improvement by the end of my tenure." "I've heard it said," he added, that his successor, William C. Casey, "is working hard on it."

Samuel Huntington, director of Harvard's Center for International Affairs, said "much of the antagonism caused by Vietnam and Watergate has declined, and clearly new relationships have been established." And, he noted, "the agency also has a lot more money to fund academic projects."

Richard W. Cottam, a specialist in Iranian politics at the University of Pittsburg, criticized the agency's approach.

"What they too often do is seek a mainstream opinion that reinforces the conventional view in Washington, and the result is the kind of situation we had in Iran," said Cottam, who said he worked for the CIA before 1958. "The CIA was listening then to the academics who were telling them what they wanted to hear, namely that the shah was stable, and not willing to listen to those of us saying that he wasn't."

"Instead of sponsoring research projects, they should work harder on monitoring a spectrum of views. When you go out looking for a certain point of view, you're going to find it, because the fact is that the academic is too often for sale."

Professor Joseph Nye of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, a specialist in nuclear proliferation and a former State Department official, said he "saw no problem" with accepting CIA funding so long as the source of the funding could be disclosed and no censorhsip was involved.

"I see nothing wrong with the CIA using academics for research so long as it's on the public record," said Nye. "The touchstone for academics has got to be openness."

David Rosenberg, a political scientist and Philippine specialist at Middlebury College, consulted for the CIA while on sabbatical in 1983. He said he argued that there was no link between Moscow and the Philippine revolutionary movement.

"They asked me to present an 'outside view' and I did," he said yesterday. Rosenberg said it is important for scholars like himself to present different points of view to the CIA, and that "a lot of the stigma of talking to the CIA has diminished."

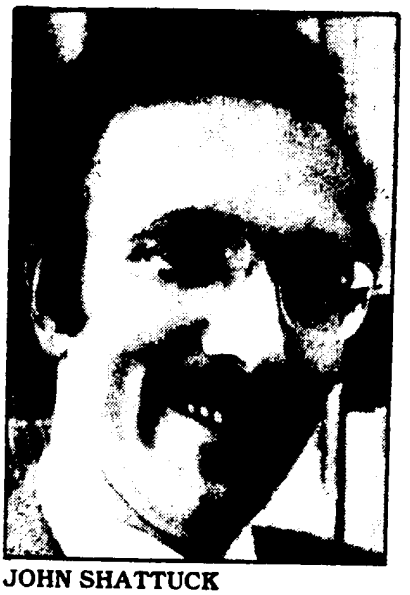
"I think the intelligence branch of the CIA is very slowly coming out of the closet. They know they lack respectability, and I think they're trying to cultivate it."

Scholars, he said, are also increasingly willing to distinguish between the analytical and operational wings of the CIA and feel less uneasy about trading views with CIA analysts.

"It's pretty tweedy place," he said. "It has the highest percentage of PhD's of any agency in the government."

Others, however, oppose any CIA involvement on campus.

"Everyone's concerned about whether the CIA contracts are above board, but no one is talking about the heart and gut issue of whether this kind of money isn't subversive of the whole notion of academic freedom," said Dr. John Mack, professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School. The question isn't addressed by the scholars involved "because their freedom to think has been bought. That doesn't mean they're bad, just that it's hard to accept this kind of money and maintain a spirit of open academic inquiry. The end result is that the whole university process gets co-opted."



JOHN SHATTUCK
Sees trend toward more CIA ties

STANSFIELD TURNER
Former CIA director

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